

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
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R 251357Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4162
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
SUSOUTHCOR QUARRY HTS CANAL ZONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3994

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NU
SUBJECT: REGIME REMAINS STABLE ONE MONTH AFTER SOMOZA'S HEART
ATTACK

SUMMARY: THE GON HAS CONTINUED TO FUNCTION GENERALLY SMOOTHLY DES-
PITE THE INCAPACITATION OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA AS A RESULT OF HIS JULY
24 HEART ATTACK. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME MINOR SIGNS OF FRICTION AMONG
REGIME MEMBERS, SOME POSTPONEMENT OF DECISIONS, EXTENSIVE CONTIN-
GENCY PLANNING BY ALL POLITICALLY ACTIVE SECTORS, AND SOME INCI-
PIENT SIGNS OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY. BUT, IN GENERAL, THERE HAS
BEEN LITTLE EFFECT ON THE DAILY LIFE OF THE AVERAGE NICARAGUAN LARGE-
LY DUE TO THE PROSPECT OF SOMOZA RETURNING TO HIS JOB.
END SUMMARY

1. THE MOST OBVIOUS CHANGE OCCASIONED BY PRES. SOMOZA'S HEART
ATTACK HAS BEEN IN NEWSPAPERS COVERAGE. WHAT USED TO BE DAILY PHOTOS
AND STORIES IN SOMOZA-FAMILY NEWSPAPER NOVEDADES, OF HIS MEET-
INGS, RECEPTIONS, AND INAUGURATIONS HAS BECOME REGULAR MEDICAL
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BULLETINS INDICATING HIS SATISFACTORY AND CONSTANTLY IMPROVING
CONDITION COUPLED WITH EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE FOR HIS SPEEDY RECOV-
ERY, (NOTABLY INCLUDING A MESSAGE FROM CATHOLIC BISHOPS). OPPOSI-
TION DAILY LA PRENSA WHICH NORMALLY STUDIOUSLY IGNORES SOMOZA'S
ACTIVITIES COVERED HIS CONDITION, BUT CONTINUES REFERRING TO HIM AS
GENERAL SOMOZA, NOT PRESIDENT SOMOZA.

2. ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF THE LEADERSHIP HIATUS HAS BEEN THE ABSENCE OF ANY EXPLOITATION OF POSSIBLE GON INSTABILITY BY FSLN TERRORISTS OR OTHER OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME. EXPLANATIONS OF THIS FACT RANGE FROM FEAR OF MASSIVE RETALIATION BY THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN) TO A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE BASED ON THE CONVICTION THE PROCESS OF WEAKENING OF THE REGIME HAS BEEN AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGERED BY THE HEART ATTACK REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SOMOZA EVENTUALLY RESUMES HIS DUTIES.

3. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HAVE SPENT THEIR TIME THEORIZING VARIOUS SUCCESSION SCENARIOS WHEREBY THEY MIGHT OBTAIN SOME INFLUENCE. THE ONLY CHALLENGE TO THE REGIME POSED BY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PCN) WAS A POSITION RAISED IN CONGRESS THAT THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRED NAMING AN INTERIM PRESIDENT. THEIR CHALLENGE CAME THREE WEEKS AFTER SOMOZA WAS FLOWN TO MIAMI AND WAS BRUSHED ASIDE BY CONGRESSIONAL PRESIDENT HUECK AS BEING OUT OF ORDER.

4. DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN HANDLED BY REGULAR MEETINGS OF A KITCHEN CABINET WHICH WE BELIEVE IS COMPRISED OF: (A) ACTING CHIEF DIRECTOR OF GN, GEN. JOSE R. SOMOZA; (B) CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, GEN. SAMUEL GENIE; (C) GEN. REYNALDO PEREZ VEGA, GN-1; (D) PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE PABLO RENER; (E) MINGOV ANTONIO MORA; (F) MIN TREASURY GUSTAVO MONTIEL; AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST (G) THE PRESIDENT'S SON MAJ. ANASTASIO "TACHITO" SOMOZA. TACHITO HAS BEEN SHUTTTLING BETWEEN MIAMI AND NICARAGUA AND APPARENTLY ACTING AS HIS FATHER'S SPOKESMAN.

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5. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SIGNS OF FRICTIONS. THE FACT THAT CORNELIO HUECK, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, HAS BEEN LEFT OUT OF THE KITCHEN CABINET HAS REPORTEDLY MADE HIM UNHAPPY AND HAS LED SOME IN THE PCN TO RECONSIDER WHETHER HE, RATHER THAN RENER OR SEN. ROBERTO MARTINEZ (A RETIRED GENERAL WHOSE NAME ALSO OCCASIONALLY ARISES) MIGHT BE THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS CANDIDATE FOR THEIR SUPPORT IF A NEW PRESIDENT WERE TO BE SELECTED. THEIR THINKING IS THAT HUECK WOULD DO MORE TO WEAKEN THE REGIME THAN WOULD RENER.

6. THERE HAS BEEN A NOTABLE ABSENCE OF CEREMONIES AT WHICH THE PRESIDENT WOULD NORMALLY PRESIDE. THE SUPREME COURT REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN COUNSELLED TO HOLD UP ITS DECISION ON THE APPEALS OF THE SANDINISTA GUERRILLAS UNTIL SOMOZA RETURNS. THE ROYAL SPANISH VISIT HAS BEEN POSTPONED, AS HAVE SOMOE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL POLICY MEETINGS.

7. A CALL FOR REUNIFICATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE SPLINTER PARTIES HAS BEEN ISSUED BY THE PCN AND PUBLICIZED BY P.J. CHAMORRO IN HIS OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER, LA PRENSA, BUT FACES SERIOUS OBSTACLES. THIS INITIATIVE PROBABLY WAS MOTIVATED AS MUCH BY THE RECENT VISIT OF AMB. ALLARD LOWENSTEIN AND UPCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AS IT WAS

BY SOMOZA'S HEALTH.

8 . IN SUMMARY, ONE MONTH AFTER THE HEART ATTACK, THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT SIGNS OF CHANGE IN NICARAGUA. AT THE SAME TIME NEARLY EVERYONE IS CONVINCED THAT A PROCESS OF CHANGE HAS BEEN LAUNCHED INASMUCH AS SOMOZA CAN NEVER RESUME THE HEAVY INVOLVEMENT IN RUNNING ALL ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND HIS BUSINESS ENTERPRISES WITHOUT SETTING HIMSELF UP FOR A FATAL HEART ATTACK. THE STABILITY DURING THE PAST MONTH MAY BE DUE LARGELY TO THE BELIEF SOMOZA WILL SURVIVE AND RETURN. HOWEVER, IT ALSO SUGGESTS A SIGNIFICANT, INHERENT REGIME STABILITY WHICH COULD CONTINUE MUCH AS IT HAS DURING THE PAST MONTH IF THERE WERE A SUCCESSION CRISIS AND RENER WERE ELEVATED TO THE PRESIDENCY, AS MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE WOULD BE THE LIKELY OUTCOME. AS THINGS NOW STAND, SOMOZA IS GENERALLY EXPECTED
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TO RETURN TO MANAGUA IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, BARRING UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.
RUBENSTEIN

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NNN

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